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Letter dated 6 June 2002 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Singapore to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

During the private meeting of the Security Council on 31 May 2002 to wrap up the work of the Council, many participants responded positively to the suggestion made by the Singapore Presidency of the Council for the month of May that it would proceed to prepare, under its own responsibility, a summary paper on the main points raised at the meeting.

The summary paper is attached (see annex). The purpose of the paper is to indicate the areas and suggestions for follow-up action. It is not meant to be exhaustive on the issues raised, but for use as a resource to improve the work of the Security Council, both procedural and substantive.

I would be grateful if the contents of the present letter and its attachment could be brought to the attention of the members of the Council and issued as a document of the Council.

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Annex to the letter dated 6 June 2002 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Singapore to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Security Council private meeting on 31 May 2002 to wrap up the work of the Council for May 2002

Summary paper on follow-up action

General points on the work of the Security Council

- The Security Council must take stronger steps to implement its own resolutions. The Security Council cannot selectively implement only certain resolutions. A catalogue of Security Council resolutions that have not been implemented and need to be followed up could be prepared.

- There are some inexplicable omissions in the Council's agenda which are not commensurate with the gravity of the actual situation and the potential impact of the conflict. The Council must live up to its Charter obligations, particularly in preventing the outbreak of conflicts.

- The Council is most effective when united. Leadership is critical, whether it is the Secretary-General, a lead country or United Nations representatives on the ground. Council pronouncements must be supplemented by diplomacy in the field. The Council must work with others to find common ground among interested parties. It should act rapidly and decisively, drawing on all the help it can obtain. In this regard, it should strengthen its relationship with relevant regional organizations and other United Nations bodies. This is the essence of a multilateral approach. Quarterly meetings among the Presidents of the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly and the Secretary-General could be held on a specific topical issue.

- Successful exit has to rest on a commitment to stay until the risk of relapse has passed. For sustainable peace, the Security Council should develop a more comprehensive approach by integrating political, socio-economic and humanitarian dimensions into its work ranging from conflict-prevention, peacekeeping and post-conflict peace-building.

- The Council's agenda is overloaded. There is a need to sharpen strategic focus. In this regard, the Secretariat's analytical and strategic capabilities should be strengthened along the lines of the Brahimi report (A/55/305-S/2000/809) in order to effectively support the Council.

Working methods and procedures

- The Council should be more transparent. In particular, there should be more public meetings, and more judicious use of closed-door informal consultations. Council members should not be wary of making their differences known or mute voices of dissent.

- There was broad support for an interactive style for Council debates, including allowing non-Council members to speak first, alternating between Council and

non-Council members, setting strict time limits and cutting out congratulatory remarks. Statements should be focused on the subjects under discussion.

- More orientation public meetings should be held so that Council decisions are not pre-cooked before non-Council members are able to give their inputs. "Outreach" public meetings like the one held on the Ad Hoc Working Group on Africa could be replicated for other Working Groups.

- Background papers of meetings are useful and should be prepared where possible. Non-Council members should be duly notified of public meetings, including publishing the Council's intention to hold public debates in the Journal of the United Nations a week in advance. There is a need to improve or maintain the emergency messaging system for notification of urgent and unscheduled meetings of the Council to keep non-Council members duly informed.

- There was also some support for the application of Articles 31 and 32 of the Charter of the United Nations to all meetings of the Council, including informal consultations of the whole. This would mean that the representative of any given country would be involved whenever the Council considers a report on the situation in that particular country.

- Briefings to non-Council members after informal consultations of the whole should be institutionalized, regular and up-to-date. This could be done through for example the appointment of a spokesperson.

- Active use of the Internet, for example the Singapore Presidency web site (www.mfa.gov.sg/unsc/presidency02), could help disseminate information about the Council's work. The Secretariat should look into assisting those Council members who do not have the resources or staff to run such a web site.

Wrap-up sessions

- The objective of wrap-up sessions is to make concrete proposals to improve the Council's work. There was broad support for institutionalizing regular wrap-up sessions involving non-Council members.

Security Council missions

- Council missions are useful and have an important role to play. However, the Council should draw up clear mandates and develop transparent and objective criteria for future dispatches of missions, including the size, composition and costs of these missions. Such a cost-benefit analysis could be included in the Council's annual report to the General Assembly.

- It is important for Council members on mission trips to have day-to-day coordination to make sure that members are kept aware of the latest developments and are able to present a united front. Special representatives of the Secretary-General to the conflict situation should contribute fully to these missions.

Situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

- There was general disappointment that the Council could not ensure compliance with its own resolutions, particularly resolution 1405 (2002),

which welcomed the Secretary-General's initiative to send a fact-finding team to the Jenin refugee camp. Some speakers regretted that the Council had lost its initiative to the General Assembly.

- The Council should redouble its efforts to fulfil its responsibility on this issue, including realizing the two-State vision of Israel and Palestine living side by side within secure and recognized borders.

East Timor

- East Timor is one of the Council's success stories. Among the reasons for its success were the Council's rapid and decisive action, a clear and robust mandate, and close partnership with all the partners who could help. Equally importantly, the Council should not withdraw too early and risk a relapse.

Ad Hoc Working Group on Africa

- The public debate on the Working Group brought focus to African issues and provided useful recommendations, which have been encapsulated in the consolidated summary issued in a note by the President. These recommendations should be followed up promptly within a defined time-line.
- The Working Group on Africa can become a model for an institutionalized framework of cooperation between the Security Council and other United Nations bodies and regional and subregional organizations.

Great Lakes region

- The Council's mission to the Great Lakes region has made progress in the peace process. However, follow-through on the recommendations made by the mission is essential.

Sierra Leone

- There was broad agreement that the elections went well, but the Council needs to continue to pay close attention to the situation. The Council should also start considering a defined exit strategy, possibly along the lines of the United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor (UNMISET).

Liberia

- There remain concerns about the situation in Liberia and its inter-linkages with the Mano River region. In this regard, the establishment of the United Nations for West Africa Office would help, as well as continued dialogue within the Mano River Union countries to strengthen confidence-building measures. There is a need to ensure full implementation of Council resolution 1408 (2002).